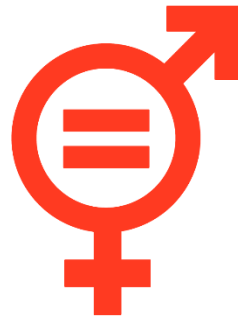




5 GENDER EQUALITY



MODERATORS

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The 17 Rooms initiative is convened by the Brookings Institution and The Rockefeller Foundation to stimulate near-term cooperative actions to advance the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This document summarizes insights and actions that emerged from the working group discussions in Room 5 during the 17 Rooms 2020 flagship process. The text was independently prepared by the Room's Moderators and participants, in response to the common question asked of all Rooms in 2020: "In light of recent crises linked to COVID-19, systemic racism, and other urgent challenges, what are 1 to 3 actionable priorities over the coming 12-18 months that address near term needs while also making a decisive contribution to protecting or advancing your Goal's 2030 results? What actions can members of your Room take to advance these priorities?" Corresponding documents prepared by all the other Rooms are available [here](#), alongside a synthesis report prepared by the 17 Rooms secretariat.

To accelerate SDG 5, and all 17 SDGs, we need more women leaders practicing feminist leadership with greater connections to one another. We also need to broadest possible constituency to embrace the message that gender equality matters. These are some of the challenges we must address:

We need more women leading institutions and countries. Currently, women make up nearly [70 percent of non-profit employees](#) but hold [less than 30 percent of top leadership positions](#). Even when women reach the top, they earn only [66 percent of what their male peers earn](#). Women of color are the most underrepresented, as people of color account for only [14 percent of non-profit board members](#). In short, institutions with a stronger ratio of women in leadership, management, and the workforce [outperform those with fewer women](#). And this is true for countries as well – countries with the highest gender equality scores are also the top performers in terms of the human development index.

We need to connect women leaders across age, race, and geography. The challenges faced by young women leaders are unique because of their age and gender. The compounding effects of intergenerational gatekeeping, ageism, sexism, racism, and other prejudices often prevent young women from realizing their potential as leaders. And in a world of rapidly changing norms, technology, and practices, mature leaders are finding themselves challenged to operate differently. To increase the effectiveness and impact of women leaders (of all ages), and to expand the leadership pipeline, we need to match skills and experiences of leaders across generations, race, and geographies.

We need more connective tissue between siloed SDG 5 efforts. In reflecting upon SDG 5, we realize that there is lots of activity happening, but there is a lack of convergence. We should not aspire to create a singular movement, but to increase connections and synergies among the organic and divergent leadership and initiatives around the world. We note that there are leadership incubators and coalitions for young African leaders, assemblies of North American and European elders, assemblies of movement leaders from Latin America or Asia, but there is not enough intersectionality. One way of creating greater coherence is to simply better connect women leaders.

We need the general public to understand and get excited about gender equality. One of the key gaps preventing the acceleration of gender equality is a lack of widespread engagement on the issue. Despite the popularization of gender equality communications and programming in the development, non-profit and philanthropy sectors—messaging about gender equality is still failing to reach a larger audience. Conversations about gender equality tend to be echoes that reverberate within spaces of the converted. Outside the development sector, there tend to be sharp divisions about what gender equality really means, and a lack of engagement from men in gender equality initiatives.

Proposal 1: Promoting networked and inclusive leadership for gender equality

As one way of achieving these goals, Room 5 proposes the creation of an “inclusive and inter- generational leadership incubator.” This could mean a variety of things. We might identify an organization willing to build out a leadership incubator within its portfolio of programs. Or we might ask existing leadership initiatives or incubators to adopt cross- generational elements as part of their programming. For instance, Rockefeller could incorporate a pairing of next generation and current feminist leaders in their upcoming Bellagio programs. Or we might more broadly catalyze a “campaign” challenging or inviting women leaders to join with someone across generations and geographies to learn from one another over the course of the coming year. We could create milestones or virtual gatherings leading into the twenty-fifth anniversary of Beijing – in which we capture and tell the stories of cross- generational leadership pairings that are making a difference.

One immediate action has been the formation of the “[five4five](#)” challenge stewarded by five members of the room and announced at the Horasis Extraordinary meeting. The goal of this grassroots social media campaign is to galvanize women supporting women to ensure full and effective leadership and participation at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

In addition, we are working on a platform for action to drive networked and inclusive leadership across gender equality convening spaces. This platform will consist of a core set of accountabilities in order to provide

pathways for grassroots, indigenous, and young gender equality advocates to engage in traditionally 'elite' spaces; pair leaders across generations and geographies to learn from one another; and build new relationships grounded in meaningful partnership, not paternalism. We are planning to enact this platform in spaces where Room 5 networks are convening, beginning with Committed Women Leaders, Women Political Leaders, and at CARE. We invite all room members to join us in helping to develop this platform, to discuss inclusive leadership and incorporate a gender equality lens into the recommendations of all rooms.

These actions will contribute to SDG 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

Proposal 2: A creative competition to advance breakthrough messaging on gender equality

Room 5 also conceptualized a global competition¹ that could advance creative breakthrough messaging for SDG 5. COVID-19 threatens to overwhelm gender equality messaging given news coverage and global rhetoric focused on the pandemic, but it has also meant that more people are online and seeking to engage with entertaining and creative content. Moreover, the #BlackLivesMatter movement has pushed the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion to the forefront of global consciousness. The competition would invite the general public to submit content that will inspire innovative and inclusive conversations around gender equality. Submissions could include poetry, photographs, essays, film/TV pitches, music, memes, and more.

The barrier to entry for this competition should be low. The competition should welcome formal creatives and non-creatives alike to participate. It should also encourage submissions from diverse people, including men/non-binary people, people of color, people with disabilities, and people without a lot of financial or technological resources. Submission instructions should be as short and simple as possible, and in multiple languages (the official languages of the UN at a minimum). The platforms for submission should be accessible to diverse people and welcome different types of content.

Room 5 also envisioned an innovative prize model: a "basket of prizes." That is, we would make a variety of prizes available and give winners of the challenge the option to choose their prize, driving home the idea "that you are in charge of your own empowerment and defining what advancement means to you." Potential prizes for this basket of prizes could include time with a celebrity/public figure (the purpose of including this as a prize is to show winning can be about connectivity and humanity), payment for the intellectual property of the winning content, sponsorship to conferences, and more.

The Room noted it would be critical to have a diverse judging panel. From the onset, the Room stressed the importance of elevating "non-usual suspects" in the operationalization and popularization of the competition (e.g., minority led/global south managing partners and firms).

If executed well, this competition is expected to bring in the "non-converted" to support the movement for gender equality; build excitement in the run up to the 2021 Generation Equality Forum, possibly through a partnership with UN Women; provide advisory support on messaging for leaders advocating for SDG 5; and keep gender equality at the forefront of the global agenda as the world works to "build back better."

¹ There was some discussion in the room around whether "competition" is a feminist term. In the end, the group reached consensus that encouraging women and girls to compete for accomplishments can be feminist and failing to do so actually harms women and girls.